The Mire End Tribune, Issue 5

The irregular mini-supplement and newsletter for the a/state RPG
Published by Contested Ground Studios

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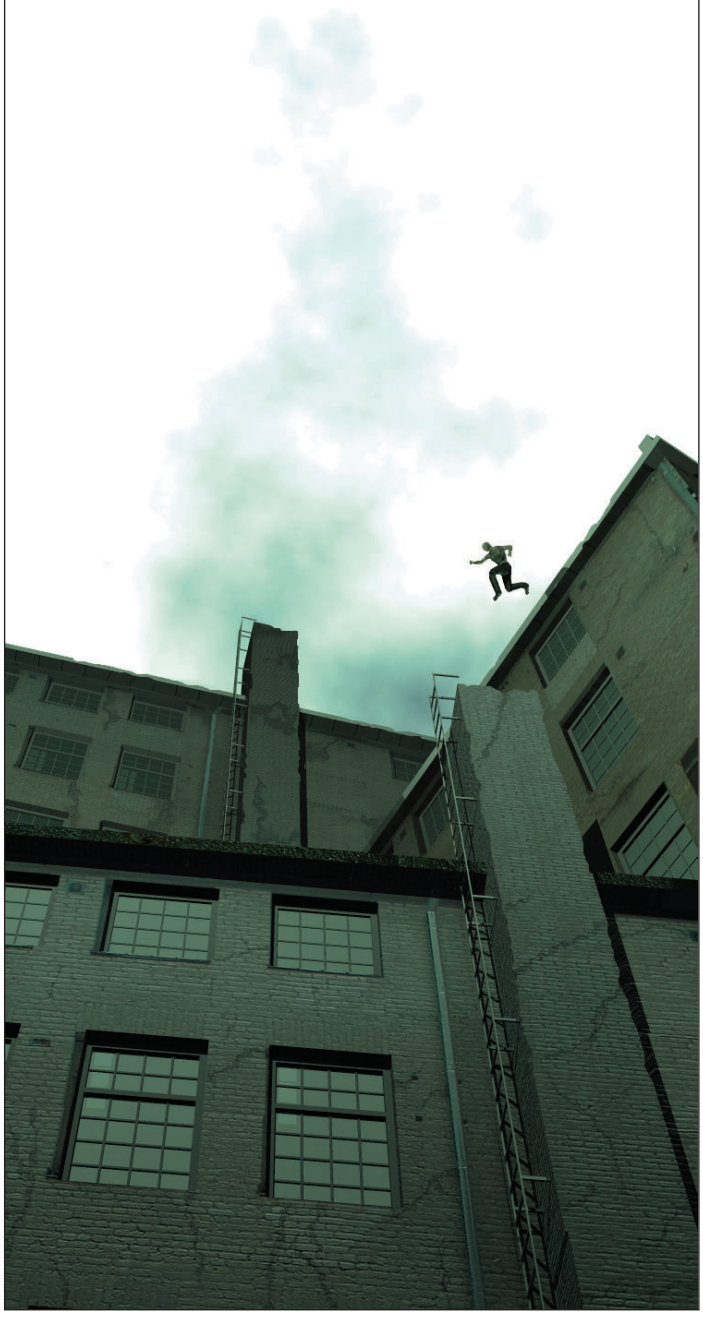

This Issue:

Features

'Free Running'
A death-defying sport by Colin Chapman

'The Goy's Fist Derby'
Dangerous and deadly antics in the world of illegal ekranoplan racing by Harvey Barker.

'Roll Up, Roll Up!'
Treading the boards with Gregor Hutton.

'Chain's Gym'
The place to go in Mire End for aspiring cripplecut fighters, by Ed Handley.

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From The Grounds

Faces In The Crowd

Mire End News

Small Ads

The Workshop

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a/state is a game for mature gamers. Remember, it's only a game. The views expressed in some parts of this book do not necessarily represent the view of the staff of Contested Ground Studios. This is a work of fiction and should be treated as such. Contested Ground Studios take no responsibility for physical or mental damage as a result of reading or using this book in other ways. In other words, if you hit your friend over the head with this, then it's not our fault. If anything in a/state disturbs or upsets you, then it's probably best that you stop reading now. If you choose to continue, then on your head be it. Although, as we said, it's only a game and should be treated as such. If you're a concerned parent who's reading this, aghast at what your child has been looking at, then maybe you should pay closer attention to what your child is purchasing, rather than blaming us for publishing what is, admittedly, a fairly darkly themed game.

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The Goy's Fist Derby **5**
by Harvey Barker
Every year the illegal ekranoplan racing fraternity gathers for the carnival of crashes known as the Goy's Fist Derby. Complete with adventure nugget, this article brings you the history and violent nature of this deadly race.

Roll Up, Roll Up! **7**
by Gregor Hutton
There's no business like showbusiness! At least, for struggling actors and writers everywhere there isn't. Gregor Hutton takes a peek behind the stage door to see what it takes to be an actor in the theatres of The City.

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by Ed Handley
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The Workshop **11**
by Colin Chapman
Musical instruments for all occasions!

Mire End Tribune

Issue 5 "Local News For Local People" 3p

Provost Crackdown On Racing

TCMAA Provosts recently announced a crackdown on illegal ekranoplan racing. A spate of violent crashes, leading to many deaths, is believed to have prompted this announcement.

A Provost spokeswoman gave the following statement: "Whilst legal racing, under the auspices of the leagues, is an enjoyable entertainment, illegal racing benefits no one. These uncontrolled and unregulated events are the cause of death and injury in many areas. We will be enforcing the laws to their limit and ensuring safety for all residents of the TCMA."

At this point, no member of the unregulated racing fraternity was available for comment.

Valuable Dog Stolen, Maybe Eaten

Local resident Jaimes Barrowmaker was yesterday mourning the loss of his prized racing hound. The race-winning dog, which races under the name of 'Gadsbroke's Lady', was taken from Mr Barrowmaker's rooms while he was visiting a local hostelry.

Said Mr Barrowmaker: "That there mutt was my life, she was. I don't know what I'll do without her. It's a bloomin' tragedy, that's what it is! Heartless bastards, she was just a little thing."

All the evidence points to Gadsbroke's Lady having been eaten, as scraps of skin bearing distinctive marks were found in an alleyway to the rear of Mr Barrowmaker's tenement.

Respected local Lostfinder Janus Kripitsch has been called in to investigate, but professes little optimism for a happy or speedy conclusion: "It's a sad case, right enough. She was a lovely dog, but it doesn't look that good. Still, I'll let you know if anything comes up, to be sure."

Spode Demands Villification: Non-negotiable!

More On Page 6!

Three Children Killed In Rooftop Plunge

Three young children were tragically killed when they fell three storeys from the roof of a Mire End tenement. It is believed all three were in the care of the Third Church Home For Unwanted Children.

At the time of their deaths, it is reported that they were emulating the activities of a group of local free-runners. Father Guy Herbert of the Third Church Home was said to be unavailable for comment due to his "extreme distress" at the incident.

This is not the first time that children have been killed or injured in Mire End taking part in this dangerous sport. The Mire End Tribune calls upon parents and guardians to warn their children of the dangers involved and be extra vigilant.

Competition Time!

As part of our drive to promote literacy in Mire End, the Tribune is proud to announce a new competition!

A grand prize is offered for the best article on life in Mire End.

All submissions to be made to the Tribune, addressed to the Editor.

small ads

Wanted: Gorunna firearm, the bigger the better. Need second-hand, but relatively new will do. Willing to pay well, no questions asked. GorunnaGuy, Cafe Informatika, Fogwarren.

Info Wanted. Cult of Lady Isabel. Payment based on usefulness of information, up to 30 Pounds. Call Longshore University, Department of Religion and Cult Activity, 293 34666. Ask for Helena Gorodin.

For Sale: Gorunna Firebreaker GR-75a. Only fired twice, this year. Reasonable offers. Inquire GorunnaGuy, Cafe Informatika, Fogwarren

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Wanted: Brawny, strong handlers. Small job moving office supplies from Mire End to Folly Hills. No references needed. Call Jikky, 021-3198.

Are you a child under 15? Longshore University is looking for ex-mikefighter pilots to take part in post-career evaluation. Possible new jobs available. 95 Tweek Canal Walk (fifth floor, knock once, rap three times).

Are you a gambler? Scurt racing, ekranoplan racing, cripplecut fighting, timbrano ball, other sports. All bets accepted. See Darkie Ealsh, Grimbear Tavern, Mire End.

Rally! Want to see Transit Militia line reopened in Mire End? Meeting on second day of week, early evening, Shale Hall.

New taste experience! Accomplished cook at eatery in Mire End wishes to extend invitation to all to taste test new foodstuff. Free! Ingredients include scurt and nebelweed. All next week. Slippery Jim's Eatery.

Wanted, Information leading to the recovery of typesetting equipment and colour ink lost while being transhipped through Fogwarren, and the arrest of those responsible. Contact Litz at Sideband Media, Security Office.

Missing, one racing scurt, answers to the name Furious George. Contact 146-3897, ask for Hans.

from the grounds

a/state Release

Well I never, it's finally out! Yes, as many of you may have noticed, a/state has finally been released. We'd like to thank everyone who's supported us over the past few years of development and hope your patience has been rewarded with an RPG that you'll enjoy for years to come. In addition, our thanks to everyone who has bought a copy of the game, whether from our online store or from your friendly local games shop.

So What's To Come?

'The Lostfinders Guide To Mire End' (32pp, colour cover, B&W art) is slated for release in August with 'Avenues & Alleyways' (128pp, colour cover, B&W art) having a projected December release. We'll also be continuing our online support, with further issues of the Mire End Tribune, further free downloads and a smattering of PDF-only adventures and mini-supplements.

Variations On A Theme: This Sporting Life

This issue of the MET follows the theme of sports, pastimes and entertainment. Within these pages you'll find articles on a variety of topics, including the lethal sport of free-running, an equally deadly ekranoplan race and a detailed look at the actor as a character.

This is the first in a series of themed issues of the MET, with other upcoming themes including warfare & combat and myths & folklore. As always, if you have any ideas you'd like to submit for inclusion in the MET, feel free to drop us a line at: tribune@contestedground.co.uk

the reading list

John

Reading: 'The Difference Engine' (novel) by William Gibson and Bruce Sterling.
Listening: 'Pawn Shoppe Heart' by The Von Bondies, 'Original Soundtrack' for Oceans 11.

Malcolm

Reading: 'One Lamp' (anthology) edited by Gordon Van Gelder, 'Robot Commando' by Steve Jackson & Ian Livingston, 'The Torture Garden' (novel) by Octave Mirabeau.
Listening: 'Franz Ferdinand' by Franz Ferdinand, 'Unthugged' by Dan Greenpeace & DJ Yoda, 'Candy Apple Grey' by Husker Du, 'Cool To You' by The Descendents.

Paul

Reading: Not a thing. We gouged out his eyes for a laugh. Ooops! We've blinded our artist! Applications to....
Listening: 'Cool To be You' by The Descendents, 'Indestructible' by Rancid.

free running

by Colin Chapman

Mankind will always seek to push its physical limits, to build strength and grace, to fight, to run. In The City, this latter drive has manifested in the sport called Free Running, a sport where the participants race across the rooftops, leaping from building to building, swinging from railings, and balancing precariously atop the narrowest of ledges and gangways, a deadly fall only a misstep away.

Free Running originated in the poorer burghs of The City, disaffected youths initially challenging each other to death-defying rooftop races and leaps, but over time the sport evolved as these haphazard races became more commonplace and organised, and those few serious about the sport began to train.

Abandoned industrial factories and warehouses became the ideal training grounds, impromptu meeting places for serious Free Runners from the local area, where they could not only practise their skills in relative safety, but build a sense of camaraderie. For many, Free Running became an almost spiritual experience, an expression of Man vs. The City, or a means of becoming more attuned to the vast, sprawling metropolis. Small wonder a few devotees of the Third Church of God the Architect also became Free Runners, seeing in the sport a very physical expression of The City as God's testing ground.

Although a far cry from being a truly organised sport, Free Runs do draw some local crowds, onlookers lining the rooftops and streets, or leaning out of windows, eager to catch a glimpse of the Runners' astounding gymnastics, the ever-present chance of a fatal plummet adding much to the spectacle. Sideband Media have even televised a handful of Free Runs, with some success, and are considering pushing the burgeoning sport forward, encouraging Runners to form teams and seek sponsorship, although to date most Free Runners have resisted this commercial drive.

The most dedicated of Free Runners have combined their passion with work, serving as runners, messengers, and couriers, rapidly delivering messages and light parcels in their local area, traversing the rooftops faster than any streetbound pedestrian can. Others, less scrupulous in nature, have become burglars, their particular skills lending themselves well to swift rooftop entries and escapes.

new character type

Free Runner

Athlete and gymnast combined, a Free Runner is an agile rooftop racer, a sportsman who has honed their physical prowess, grace, co-ordination, agility and strength to a keen edge, pitting themselves against the dangerous urban environs of The City. Few have the inclination, dedication, or willingness to risk life and limb in the pursuit of a sport offering little to no recognition or opportunity for wealth, but Free Running exists nonetheless, an almost cult-like sport on the periphery of City culture.

Recommended Skills: Balancing, Climbing (Free Climbing), Falling, Jumping, Running, First Aid.
Resource: A small belt pouch and flask, and a decent pair of boots.
Wealth Level: 1 to 3

new skills

Athletic - HLT
Balancing: The ability to maintain or hold balance on narrow, slippery, or otherwise precarious surfaces.
Falling: The ability to land well following short falls, reduce injuries suffered from longer falls, and prevent falls altogether by grabbing appropriate outcrops.
Jumping: The ability to perform extended jumps or leaps.

the goy's fist derby

by Harvey Barker

One of the more famous and regular illegal ekranoplan races, the Derby is named for Kurt Goy, the famed cripplecut fighter and ekranoplan racer who died tragically during a particularly vicious and ill-tempered race. That ill-tempered race was renamed, and the sole surviving piece of Kurt, his gauntleted right hand, is now preserved as the trophy. The race is incredibly dangerous and only those who are either mad, or incredibly sure of themselves, would even dare to enter. The field varies with each running of the race, from as few as twenty vehicles to over 100. The greatest number of competitors ever to take part was in the race of seven years ago, when 109 craft were entered into what became a chaotic, brawling mess of a race.

The race is so damned dangerous because of the winding circuit it takes through the canals. It tends to avoid the main

routes and keep to the capillaries and lesser-used secondary canals. By their very nature, many of these are tight and difficult to navigate. By the third lap there can be so many blackened hulls and floating corpses strewn about the route that fast lines are hard to navigate, and care must be taken (care in this case being an extremely relative term). In truth, the closer to being clinically insane the racer is the better. Only those willing to plough through all manner of hazards at top speed have any chance at all of making a decent time.

Racers also have to face all manner of dirty tricks and campaigns of deception, before, during, and after the race. In fact, the pre-planning and backstabbing of the Derby is notorious, and pundits believe that this is as responsible for interest among fans, spectators, and even the racers, as the actual race itself.

The prize, Kurt Goy's clenched right fist (still clutching a small piece of his steering wheel), has been coated with preserving resin and affixed to a small base. The base has been fashioned from wreckage of winners' hulls; each time a winner is crowned, a piece of his hull is removed, flattened and welded onto the base. Naturally, the award has grown in size over time.

Although illegal and unsanctioned by any official racing authorities, the event is pretty well organised. Some observers have even ventured to suggest that nearly as much money changes hands in betting on the Derby as is spent on the far more prestigious Grand Canal 2000. The race always takes place somewhere in the east of The City, sometimes even straying in to the Three Canals Metropolitan Area. The Provosts take a dim view of the race if and when it encroaches on their territory, but well-placed bribes are usually sufficient to ensure that the race is not disrupted overmuch.

A route is generally mapped out which is between 5 and 10 miles in length and normally runs for 5 laps. Sometimes, the race doesn't even last that long due to the ridiculous levels of attrition.

adventure nugget

There are only a few short days to go until this year's running of the Goy's Fist Derby! The underground racing fraternity is practically wetting itself with excitement at the prospect of another titanic, bloody clash. Apart from Camden Derr, who is currently wetting himself with fear. Camden has good reason to be fearful; as the winner of last year's race, the precious trophy was entrusted to his care. Unfortunately, some ruffians have stolen the trophy from his workshop.

Derr desperately wants the trophy back, mainly to save his own hide, but also to avoid the massive loss of prestige and standing.

To this end, he's contacted the characters in a state of near panic, begging them to help him find the trophy and save his miserable life. He'll offer anything, including a part share in his racing craft (lovingly hand built over a period of years), a cut of his winnings (if he wins this year) or even his estranged sister's phone number (not such a good deal).

Some possibilities present themselves:

1) Derr's workshop in Long Pond (he recently moved there from Bankside) was targeted by a gang of thieves who wanted to nick his valuable tools and equipment. The trophy was taken during the hectic few minutes of the raid, none of the burglars realising what it was.

The miscreants in question are currently drunk and making merry in their rundown lair, having spent the proceeds of their crimes. Do they still have the trophy or has it been sold on?

2) The burglary was all part of a plan by Derr's rivals in the racing fraternity to discredit him and remove his team from the race. The robbery itself was all a front; the real target was the trophy. Derr's enemies will hold on to the trophy until the last moment, then produce it, claiming they 'liberated' it from the clutches of thieves (producing some badly beaten poor sap as evidence; this unfortunate patsy will probably be killed by the organisers of the race).

3) Derr's young assistant sneakily removed the trophy from the workshop, intending to show it off to some friends and boast about how 'the boss' was due to win it all over again in the next race. Regretfully, the young apprentice partook rather too liberally of some potent nebelweed and woke up with no memory of where he left the trophy. Scared out of his wits, he ransacked the workshop, threw some tools into the canal and tried to convince Derr that a burglary had taken place. So scared was Derr, he completely failed to notice the young man's nervousness and uncharacteristic shiftiness.

Roll up, roll up...

by Gregor Hutton

"You fugging hack! Fugging little bastrat! I said 'Hit me', not 'Hit me hard'! It's going to cost me most of my takings to get this fixed! This'd be coming out your wages, if I gave ye any!"

Cornelius spits out the tooth; a spray of bloody saliva spatters over his dress. Charlie, the little urchin, catches some too. It's not a pretty sight.

"Sorry Mr Cornelius. I'm really sorry. You'll not throw me back on the street Mr Cornelius, sir? I still want to be an actor like you. Just learning me ropes, Mr Cornelius."

"One has to suffer for one's art, Charlie. You have much to learn. Let this..." Cornelius' hand swings down clipping Charlie hard around the ear, "... be a valuable lesson. Now fetch me my make-up. The second half is in five minutes and we've a crowd to please. The show must go on."

Theatre in the City

A common pastime in The City is theatre, which is most popular at the two extremes of society: the very rich and the very poor (see a/state, p. 26). Slums are often rife with failed or struggling actors, mimes and playwrights. Wealthier sectors, meanwhile, have an elite class of highly successful playwrights and notable actors, who rub shoulders with those in the very upper echelons of power in The City.

The shows themselves vary greatly in content, quality and cost. In places such as Mire End they are often popular rubbish that are either free or cost a mere 2p to watch ('Tuppeny trash' as it is known in the business). In up-market areas tickets are far more expensive, often costing many tens of pounds for a reasonable seat with an unobstructed view. These shows are often lavish affairs, ranging from clever morality plays to simplistic tales pandering to their corporate sponsors.

The truly wealthy see theatre as a way of flaunting their wealth and status, publicly displaying what they consider 'greater cultural understanding' and 'more refined tastes' than the proles watching television. Ironically you are as likely to see good theatre if you were to travel to the most decrepit slum where even Sideband Media would not peddle their wares.

Actors range widely in ability and wealth; the two are not necessarily in direct correlation. Struggling players in slums will put on shows for free or in return for food and board, so even the poorest public houses often boast a variety of entertainment on most nights of the week, to amuse, frighten, educate, or otherwise satisfy, the patrons of these hostelries.

Bawdy, stinging satire is the most popular, and best, theatre available in The City. Almost all actors of note started on this material in poor circumstance. The lot of an actor is hard and it is often a most unforgiving trade. Should an actor fall from grace their demise can be rapid and inelegant. One week they may be starring in The City's hottest and most expensive show; the next, they may be penniless, reduced to playing for food in front of the most desperate cut-throats The City has to offer.

New Character Types

Actor/Mime

A trained actor is adept at reciting texts and poems for the entertainment of others, and, for the most vain, their own glorification. They usually possess some skill in applying make-up and theatrical disguise, coupled with a knowledge of costume. Some have other specialities such as set construction and stage lighting; almost all started at the very bottom of the entertainment ladder, and have worked their way up (or slipped back down) to where they are today. Accomplished actors are often accompanied by one to three actors-in-training. Mimes are actors who specialise in dance and non-vocal acting. Often they perform abstracted roles in the morality plays of The City's playwrights.

Recommended Skills: Act, Dance, Disguise, Fast Talk, Oration, Poetry.
Resource: Outfit, book of plays and poems, some make-up, possibly 1-3 accompanying actors-in-training.
Wealth Level: 2 to 10

Actor-in-Training

Young people wanting to break into acting start at the very bottom as an actor-in-training. For the most talented students, this phase of their career may be very short (perhaps as little as a few weeks), while the inept-but-dedicated can struggle at this level for many years. Their job is to learn from, and assist, their tutor in as many ways as their tutor sees fit. Some of the best actors are incredibly demanding with bizarre personal tastes and terrible tantrums, but to have learned from the best is almost certain to guarantee a long career for the actor-in-training when they become an actor.

Recommended Skills: Act, Fast Talk, Hide, Oration, Shadow.
Resource: Notebook, pencils, pamphlets for the latest show, a small dab of make-up, shabby clothes.
Wealth Level: 1

Playwright

Playwrights may be actors who have started composing their own material (often rehashed from classic material with which they are very familiar), or they may be individuals with a natural talent for creative writing. Unknown playwrights typically find it a struggle to have their works adopted by actors (who seldom risk performing any material save established works, or plays they themselves have written), although successful and persuasive playwrights can make a very good living if their plays achieve popularity. These individuals have a difficult life, often clashing with equally impoverished actors, forced to continually rewrite lines in plays that only the poor will see.

Even successful playwrights despair of the petty politics and vicious attitude of successful actors and wealthy, but demanding, patrons; not for nothing do broken relationships and wildly swinging moods accompany the playwright's profession.

Recommended Skills: Creative Writing, Negotiation, Persuasion, Sociology, Writing.
Resource: Books, pens, notes, leaflets for the latest show, a small jar of pills.
Wealth Level: 1 to 9

The Final Curtain

"What a show, Charlie! The adulation! The roar of approval! The rush!"

Cornelius wipes the paint from his face, revealing the deep crags and lines of a man who has been in this trade for a very long time.

"Now, here's a handful of shillings. Fetch me my dinner, get something for yourself and find out why that lostfinder was in the crowd tonight. Good lad."

Charlie leaves and the door swings shut behind him.

The pain of the tooth is gone, forgotten. Cornelius looks into the mirror. The face looks back. Noble, exalted.

"I am Cornelius Seton. Actor."

Chain's gym

by Ed Handley

Heading north from the abandoned Mire End terminus, towards Forest Green, is Channing Street, a once thriving row of commercial ventures from printers to mechanics. Over the last few hundred years these enterprises have fallen by the wayside, one by one, and their former premises have been taken over by others and often put to quite different uses. A good example of this is located two thirds of the way down Channing Street: a slightly raised building that, according to the faded and peeling paint work, was once Clarke's Foundry & Mechanical Repairs. For the past decade or so this building has borne a new sign, hung over the small door in the large rusted shutter that once enabled goods to be driven up the ramp into the building. The sign reads: 'Chain's Gym', a name that has a reputation many consider completely unsavoury.

From the outside, the building is fairly unprepossessing: a square brick block just over two stories high, with a ramp leading down to the rotted remains of a pair of wooden gates. The state of the gates makes the high brick walls, that create a shallow, stagnant pool for visitors to wade through, irrelevant as a security measure (though few would be brave or foolhardy enough to try and break into Chain's Gym).

Given the decayed condition of the old iron shutter, visitors can only enter through the door under the sign. This opens on the main floor of the gym, a wide-open L-shaped hall that was once the workshop of the garage. Now, it is divided into

three fighting rings surrounded by racks of free weights and shelves for exercise equipment, such as jump ropes and medicine balls, with just enough clear space between them and the rings for a couple of people to work out. In the rear, right corner, is a slightly larger space where a number of sandbags are suspended from frames for people to practice their kicking and punching.

The whole gym floor is permeated by the reek of stale sweat and old nebelweed smoke, and there are always at least two or three young men exercising or practising in the rings while old Luke Chain himself, and the other trainers, look on, occasionally shouting advice or encouragement. Those few areas of the walls not covered with the paraphernalia of training, are plastered with pictures of all the famous, or at least infamous, individuals who have trained at the gym over the years. The old office serves as a changing room, and the former storage area above the office, has been converted into a couple of bedrooms and a kitchen of sorts, where Luke and one or two of his trainers sleep. Given the feelings of many Mire End residents towards the gym, Chain makes sure at least two of the staff are on the premises at all times.

It is Luke Chain himself, and the many famous fighters he has trained, that give the gym its mixed reputation. One look at the arms of the grizzled trainer tells anyone who knows anything about cripplecut where Chain made his name and money, and to many Mire Enders this is enough to condemn him. To many young men and women, though, Luke's history is like a lure to canal fish. These youngsters are often eager to make the same jump Chain did, from poor street urchin to notorious ring fighter. Few make it; the rigours of the training regime Chain's demands, before he'll even let a student pick up a knife, cause more than half to give up on their dream, and most of the rest wise up the first time they taste their own blood. For those few who can or will continue, however, there are few better trainers than those at Chain's, for all of Luke's trainers have earned their stripes in the blood-soaked fighting rings.

There are, of course, many who consider Chain's training of young men and women to fight in the brutal 'sport' of cripplecut, immoral to say the least. Priests of the Third Church, for example, regularly preach the dangers of Chain's Gym, and a number of bold and foolhardy members of the Lay Reserves have attacked the gym, its students, and even on one notorious occasion, Chain himself.

These attacks have never resulted in anything other than a nasty beating for the Reserves, as there are few people more dangerous in personal combat than cripplecut fighters. Added to this is the deterrent of Chain's links to the Hohler Gang, the 'sponsors' of most of Mire End's cripplecut bouts. In his youth, Chain made a lot of money for the gang in his various fights, and there are plenty of, now-ranking, members who remember his career well. Chain even promoted fights for a while before 'selling' the Mire End promotion rights to Andy Mickay.

Regardless, those who know Luke seldom have anything bad to say about the gruff former fighter; Chain is renowned for his loyalty to the kids he instructs. Rumour has it he even goes as far as to pay a small amount of compensation to several kids he trained, whose careers were cut short by crippling injuries. Whether this is true or not, it is certainly the case that despite his former and current career, there are plenty of people to whom Luke Chain is something of a hero.

Faces in the Crowd

Boris "Sophie" Micvey

by Harvey Barker

Age: 33
Height: 6' 3"
Weight: 16st
Eyes: Pale green
Hair: Brown
Affiliations: Chain's Gym

Micvey is a notorious cripplecut fighter, renowned for his rage-filled flailing attack and uncanny ability to ignore pain. Unlike most on the cripplecut circuit, however, Micvey's story didn't end with his death. It ended when a particularly nasty blow to the head snapped something in his brain, and he came to his senses, albeit as a changed man. Seeing the light, so to speak, Micvey quit the cripplecut circuit and put his old life almost totally behind him, taking up residence in Chain's Gym as a personal trainer, and a grim advertisement for what happens when the circuit becomes too much for a man to take.

Though he remembers his past and all details of his life prior to the incident, he now insists only on being called Sophie - Sofe to his friends - and wears only women's clothing; leotards in the gym and knee-length floral frocks outside. Even more bizarrely, he seems to have no conflict with his identity or sexuality, as he still finds women attractive and is almost certainly the first to make lewd or offensive comments to or about women.

Some say Micvey's attitude and style change is simply for publicity, but those close to him say that he simply feels more comfortable and that if you want to tell him he looks silly, you should go right ahead and do it to his face.

An imposing figure, Micvey stands well over six feet tall and has an impressive, if scarred, thickly muscular body. Through one injury or another his head is completely hairless, and his stern, lantern jaw makes him stick out like a sore thumb (as if wearing dresses didn't already have that effect). Micvey can be found in the The Dog's Leg inn, if not in the gym, and is a well-liked individual with many friends in various circles.

Charlie Brunton

by Gregor Hutton

Age: Approximately 13
Height: 5' 1"
Weight: 6st
Eyes: Blue
Hair: Black
Affiliations: Cornelius Seton

Charlie is a smart but uneducated child who is currently learning the trade under the once-famous actor, Cornelius Seton. Seton is not as demanding a tutor as his fearsome reputation would suggest.

Previously, Charlie lived with his mother in Soulsgate Debtor's Prison, from where Seton purchased him for a nominal fee. He hopes one day to return to the prison and buy his mother's freedom, strutting in as a famous actor. He never knew his father, poor little tyke.

Charlie is a sprightly, outgoing little chap, seemingly unbowed by the constant berating of Cornelius Seton. If truth be known, the curmudgeonly Seton is the closest thing the young lad has ever had to a father (other than some fairly unsavoury types in Soulsgate who seemed to frequently press their attentions on his mother). For his part, Seton has become rather fond of the little chap, having never had any children of his own. The two have come to rely upon each other and Charlie now views his mentor in a very favourable light.

the workshop

musical instruments

Music is one of the ways that all classes of citizen in The City can use to express themselves, to lift their mood or to forget about their workaday cares. Presented here is a list of common instruments that PCs and NPCs can amuse themselves and others with.

Accordion

An uncommon instrument associated with The City's lower classes, despite its intricate construction, the accordion is a large, heavy squeezebox, carried with a strap, and played by means of a keyboard at one end, and a baffling array of buttons at the other.

Cost: £5 to £15
Availability: Uncommon
Weight: 7.0kg – 10.5kg

Drum

Drums can be found in a staggering varieties of shapes, sizes, sounds, and qualities, throughout The City, from the simplest upturned metal or plastic oil drum, to metal drum with tanned doghide skins, from huge metal kettle drums, to the small hand drums that can be carried under one arm.

Cost: From none to £10
Availability: Very Common
Weight: Varies greatly

Guitar

Among the most ubiquitous of instruments, the guitar ranges from the most shoddy, beaten constructions of the slums, to the graceful metal instruments of talented craftsmen, and the moulded plastic electric guitars favoured by the wealthy and rebellious youths of the macrocorps.

Cost: £2 to £250
Availability: Common
Weight: 1.5kg – 5.0kg

Harp

The harp is a large, elegant instrument, one much favoured by the orchestras playing to the upper echelons of City society, its carved metal or wood frame supporting a large number of tuned strings, played from a seated position.

Cost: £5 to £150
Availability: Rare
Weight: 5.0kg – 13.5kg

Mouth-Organ

Another instrument widely regarded as worthy only of the poor, the harmonica can be found in nearly anyone's possession, being one of the only readily affordable instruments around.

Cost: 5s to £1
Availability: Common
Weight: n/a

Penny Whistle

Although it costs significantly more than a penny, the penny whistle is still the cheapest, most easily produced instrument around, except perhaps, for the drum, consisting as it does of a short, slim, metal tube pierced with holes and fitted with a crude mouthpiece.

Cost: 1s to 5s
Availability: Very common
Weight: n/a

Piano/Organ

From the roughest of pub room uprights, to the grandest of orchestral masterpieces of craftsmanship, pianos and organs are the largest of instruments, and among the most complex to produce, their distinctive sounds making them favourite choices of both rich and poor alike.

Cost: £20 to £2000
Availability: Rare
Weight: n/a

Squeezebox

A less intricate cousin to the accordion, the squeezebox is generally much smaller, two hand-sized, button-studded ends fitted with straps attached to a simple concertina, and like the accordion it is definitely an instrument of the lower classes.

Cost: £2 to £10
Availability: Uncommon
Weight: 1.3kg – 7.0kg

Violin

The most highly regarded musical instrument in The City alongside the piano and guitar, the violin can be found everywhere, crude fiddles played with gusto in the most downtrodden pubs, while exquisitely crafted works of art produce breathtaking music in the hands of famous masters.

Cost: £3 to £1500
Availability: Uncommon
Weight: 0.3kg – 0.4kg